

# Engaging the Media for Positive Messages about Veterans and Veterans Initiatives

**Daniel Warvi**

Colorado Jail Diversion and Trauma  
Recovery Program

# “Tell Your Story”



- Once our indiv. programs were launched and running, we moved from a program for Public Health to affecting Public Policy (like it or not...).
- Public Policy is about the FUTURE.
- If we don't “Tell Our Story” there is no future for our programs, or others like it.

# Why don't we talk to the Media?



- For Veterans, our military training and experience discouraged interaction with the Media.
- Media is widely perceived to be anti-Military and anti-Veteran (whether it's true or not.)
- The Media wants the dirt when vets do bad things, but will not cover the good things.
- The Media is Stupid (Walter Reed = VHA).

# The Reality



- Most local media outlets want to do positive stories about the media - but they believe their only source is the VA.
- The VA and Legacy Veteran Service Organizations are stuck in the past in terms of Media Relations and Marketing.
- Without any other source, the Media relies on larger outlets for “information.”

# The Solution Seems Obvious, Doesn't it?

- Grant sites will need to develop a media plan, nurture relationships with local (and national) news media, and “Tell their story.”
- They will also need to answer the questions (dumb and otherwise) the Media will ask when a negative situation with veterans occurs.

# The Eightfold Path



- Source: *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*
- The Eighth Step: Tell Your Story
- The goal is to get the public to see the value of the program.

# Important Steps



- Apply the “Grandma Test”
- Gauge your Audience(s)
- Consider what Medium to Use
- Give Your Story a Logical, Narrative Flow

# Danger Zones



- Compulsive Qualifying
- Showing off ALL of your work
- Spinning a Mystery Yarn
- Inflating the Style

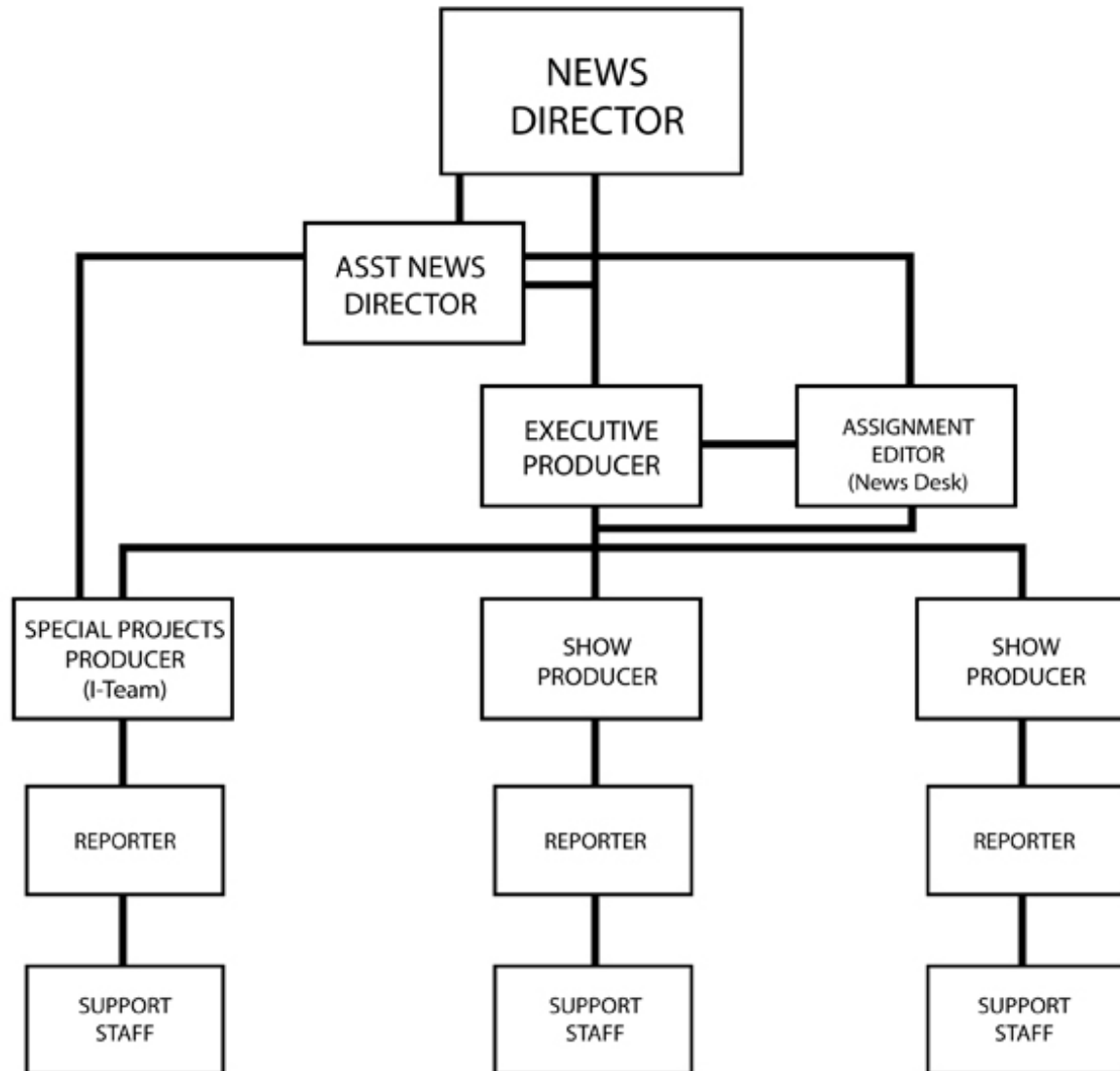


# How TV Stations Work



- For this presentation, we're only focusing on Local News Affiliate Stations (NBC, CBS, ABC, FOX, CW).
- Independent Stations MAY be more interested in Local Stories but beware...
- Drop the idea that the News Media have any political bias.

# Newsroom Org(?)



# What that Slide Means



- Assignment Editors see hundreds, if not thousands of story requests.
- Executive Producers decide what makes each newscast, with News Director direct approval of certain stories.
- Indv. Reporters CAN pitch stories, but it has to move up the “chain of command.”
- Reporters = Baseball Players at Bat.

# Ways to get your story on the news



- Individual Reporters
- Community Relations
- Special Projects

# Individual Reporters



- Focused on doing a story that has a *single* compelling character or narrative (one idea per story).
- Will tend to be assigned to one area of expertise (Education, Crime, Military, etc.).
- Assignment will usually have nothing to do with area of personal expertise.

# Community Relations



- Focused on Stories, Awards, and Off-Air projects that promote the station brand with the community.
- Choose Public Service Announcements (PSA) for Air.
- ALWAYS looking for an issue they can claim ownership in the Community.

# Special Projects



- Investigative Teams - tend to be long-term, in-depth projects with negative connotations.
- Long-format News Shows - focus on one subject, usually one hour and broadcast on weekends.
- Significant Events - Election Coverage, Political Debate, Parade/Community Event.

# Action Plan



- Find the Reporter that seems to match the story you want to tell and contact them.
- Find the Community Relations Branch and tell them about Vet-related events (Veteran Stand-down) Ask for their participation!
- (DANGER!) Contact the station about doing a special long-format story about your program.



# Danger Zones 2



- Have your media plan DONE AND IN HAND before contacting the media.
- You speak for your part of the project, not the entire project, the agency that runs it, etc.
- PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS. PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS. PROTECT YOUR CLIENTS.
- Be prepared to fight with the Reporter and walk away from the story if necessary.

# Example



## 9News coverage of CoSprings VTC

- <http://www.9news.com/news/story.aspx?storyid=167219&catid=188>

# Example Two



## Blue Star Families PSA

- [http://youtu.be/V5X\\_rAOy7ZY](http://youtu.be/V5X_rAOy7ZY)

# After The Story Airs....



- Always answer the calls from the reporter afterwards.
- Call that reporter when you have expert knowledge that affects a news item.
- Bad news does NOT get better with age..if your clients screw up big, be prepared to answer the media *quickly*.

# The End Result



- Media outlet(s) feel they have a reliable source on an important community issue
- If a station can claim ownership of a particular issue, it helps their ratings (and their bottom line!)
- Programs have a media outlet they can go to for positive stories, a way to stop negative stories, and develop a positive image with the community

# Questions



- C'mon...that was drinking from the Fire Hose....